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C. A. PIERCE, Proprietor.

THE AMERICAN FLAG.

When freedom, from her mountain height,
Unfurl'd her standard to the air,
She tore the azure robe of night,
And set the stars of glory there.
She mingled with its gorgeous dyes
The milky baldric of the skies,
And striped its pure, celestial white,
With streakings of the morning light;
Then from his mansion in the sun
She called her eagle-bearer down,
And gave into his mighty hand
The symbol of her chosen land.

Majestic monarch of the cloud,
Who rear'st aloft thy regal form,
To hear the tempest trumpings loud
And see the lightning lances driven,
When strive the warriors of the storm,
And rolls the thunder drum of heaven;
Child of the sun! to thee 'tis given
To guard the banner of the free,
To hover in the sulphur-smoke,
To ward away the battle-stroke,
And bid its blendings shine afar,
Like rainbows on the cloud of war,
The harbingers of victory!

Flag of the brave! thy folds shall fly,
The sign of hope and triumph high,
When speaks the signal trumpet-tone,
And the long line comes gleaming on,
Ere yet the life blood, warm and wet,
Has dimm'd the glistening bayonet,
Each soldier eye shall brightly turn
To where the sky-born glories burn;
And as his springing steps advance,
Catch war and vengeance from the glance,
And when the cannon mouthings loud
Heave in wild wreaths the battle-shroud,
And gory sabres rise and fall
Like shoots of flame on midnight's pall;
Then shall thy meteor glances glow,
And cowering foes shall sink beneath
Each gallant arm that strikes below
That lovely messenger of death.

Flag of the seas! on ocean wave
Thy stars shall glitter o'er the brave;
When death careering on the gale,
Sweeps darkly round the bellied sail,
And frighted waves rush wildly back
Before the broadside's reeling rack,
Each dying wanderer of the sea
Shall look at once to heaven and thee,
And smile to see thy splendors fly
In triumph o'er his closing eye.

Flag of the free heart's hope and home!
By angel hands to valor given;
The stars have lit the welkin dome
And all thy hues were born in heaven,
FOREVER FLOAT THAT STANDARD SHEET!
Where breathes the foe but falls before us,
With Freedom's soil beneath our feet,
And Freedom's banner streaming o'er us.

(From the London Once a Week.)

Life on an Alabama Plantation.

It is my eldest sister,—some years older than myself,—who lives on the Alabama plantation I have referred to. She married when I was a schoolboy, so that I have paid more visits to her than to my Charleston sister, who married ten years later. I have been the guest of my elder brother-in-law, D——, on three different plantations. He went the way of planter's sons when he was young,—leaving home to buy negroes, to grow cotton.

Twice more he has moved westward; but as he has lived nine years on his present estate, I hope he may be satisfied to remain there. My sister Anna, his wife, hopes so too, but is far from confident. In a year or two it will be time for their son Madison to begin life for himself; and Anna says that when Madison is fairly off, to shift for himself, she shall feel more secure than she does now of not having to go into a new scene of life, and among strange neighbors. It would look more like remaining, if D——would build the house he has been planning for years.

We talked it over on my first visit; and it was mentioned on my second; but nothing is done yet; and I have my doubts whether there will be. D——gave me an odd sort of a hint, the last time we spoke on the subject,—that a loghouse is safer than a farmhouse for some people, as it does not kindle so well, nor burn so fast; and as long as the abolitionists are allowed to talk, a man cannot be to careful. I could not seriously suppose, at the time, such a master could dread incendiarism at the hands of his own negroes: but I am inclined to think that he does. It seems an insane apprehension for a man to suffer under, during the mature and vigorous period of his life (he is five-and-forty); but there is no use in contending with it.

No opinion from the North has any value in this case; for a citizen from thence is either taken for an abolitionist, or informed that none but southern men have any knowledge of the designs of that "infernal race." So Anna must make up her mind to live in a loghouse for three parts of the year, till the great question of slavery is settled. During the three unhealthy months the family go down to Mobile, where they have a pleasant circle of friends, and as Anna says, can refresh their memories as how to behave in society. I do not at all agree to their savagery. They are so hospitable that they really see a great many people in the course of their nine months' abode on the plantation; and they see them in the domestic way, which is more favorable to intercourse than any amount of mere dinner or evening visiting.

The last time I went, I did hope to find some improvement in the approaches to the house, and in the surrounding features, if not in the dwelling itself. D——had made a great deal of money by several good cotton crops, and had bought more negroes; and it was natural to suppose that some of his gains would be applied to the removal of discomfiture and ugliness.

But I was cured of all such expectations before I came in sight of the house. My driver took his way among the trees, or over a knoll, crashing and plunging through the underwood, to avoid the road, which would have to be mended before we could pass some parts of it.

I saw something of the way of mending a little further on, where some mules had broken the fence. A white man, who looked muddy from head to foot, complexion and all, was chipping lazily at a rail; a negro was slowly turning a dibble in a hole which was to hold a stake; and two more negroes were warming their hands over the fire which was blazing on the ground. My driver pointed with his whip up the glade of wood, and observed that master was coming. In a moment a gentleman on a white horse came ambling down the glade, and I saw it was D——.

We agreed that the fence would hardly be closed before night at the rate the fellows were proceeding; but D——said that would be better than having it fall to pieces the next day, as it would if he hurried them. If this was really the alternative, I had nothing to say. But who was the white man actually handling tools.

Why, he was from a distance,—a hungry wretch who must get bread somehow; and hungry enough he must be to work,—or pretend to work,—with negroes. The gentleman round did not like his coming; D——himself was vexed at it; but they had ascertained that the fellow was no abolitionist; and therefore they could not send him away. Some mischief would come of it, however. It always did turn out so. If nothing worse happened, it was a bad thing for the negroes to despise a white; and they were sure to grow cockahoop when they had a white among them whom they could look down upon. What a state of society it must be in the North, D——observed, where white men are daily at work before the eyes of the negroes! For the fiftieth time I tried to make my brother-in-law comprehend that work was no degradation in my part of the country, where it was not associated with the idea of slavery, and that therefore there was nothing for anybody to despise in the act of earning one's bread; but D——cannot understand it at all.

He turned homeward with me, and he enjoyed, as more than once before, my exclamations at the bluff, half a mile from the house. The broad, brimming Alabama river ran far below, between densely wooded banks, but redeemed from a certain look of desolation by the puff of steam from a river boat which was at a landing place, which was taking in cotton and firewood. Down to the river, and away on the other side to near the horizon, was an expanse of forest so compact that it seemed as if an army might march on the tree tops for miles. Far in the distance, between the forest and the sky, appeared a wavy line of blue uplands; and here and there in the nearer regions there were clearances of some hundreds of acres, with rude paths down the river. On our side were bluffs—two or three right and left—lifting up their limestone ledges and precipitous crests from the woods below, and affording a stretch of table land, like that we were standing on, for cultivation.—D——'s plantation stretched back from the ridge above the left bank of the river, gently sloping to the southeast.

Nothing was left for the wood that could be got rid of. The house stood exposed, bare and scorched, without any shade except such as could be had by making the verandahs exceedingly wide. It looks all very pretty, it is admitted, to see a background of evergreen forest; and it sounds very tempting to go, in the hot noon into the thickets where the ground is gay with violets, mayapple, buckeye, blue-lupin, iris, and cowpoison—the fleur-de-lis of these parts; but the mosquitoes spoil everything. When one chooses one's hour for a drive among the clustering honeysuckles and the blossoming sourwood, all alive with butterflies, and the yellow jasamine, and all the combined shrubs of the garden and trees of the forest, all is charming: but it does not do to set down one's house among them. The negroes can live in thickets, and nestle under rows of Pride-of-India trees; but the whites would go mad with the bites and stings of insects.

So there stands the loghouse, as formerly, only with its shingled roof looking more parched and warped than ever, and the fences and gates grayer and shabbier.—Anna and her young daughter Minnie are in the piazza, somewhat differently occupied. My sister has her hands dyed blue. She has been standing at a long board of trestles, cutting out woolen dresses for a score of negro women and children. D—shows me her right hand, deeply marked with the rings of the large scissors, and tells that is the way ladies have to work in the South, to which Anna appends the well worn remark that the mistresses are more slaves than the negroes. Some old women are summoned to carry away the whole apparatus for to-day, and bring water and towel for mistress's hands.

I asked whether these old women could not do that sort of work. There is no such precise fit in the garments of field hands as to require skill in dressmaking. I should think; for the clothes of all the women I see in the cotton field might fit any one person as well as another. Why cannot the house servants, some of whom seem to be always sewing, spare the lady all this cutting out?

It cannot be done, I am told. It is not the fit that is the question, but the economy of the material. There is no negro woman who can learn not to cut cloth to waste. Such is plantation doctrine; but it does not hold good everywhere; for negro girls dress very well, without extravagance, in some places where they have to cut out, and make their own dresses.

Minnie, meantime, has been collecting her wits, carried off skyhigh by the book she has in her hand. Reclining in a corner of the wide sofa on the other side of the piazza, she has been lost in the witchery of some native magazine poetry, or the turns of some romantic story. The child has grown much, and is almost a woman, and a very pretty one. We rarely see in the North so healthy and blooming a form and complexion as among these southern girls who live almost constantly in the open air. This seems to do them more good than the summer heat and want of exercise to do them harm. When Minnie was once so far recalled to the realities of life as to see who we were, she was so affectionate and delighted as to enable me to recognize in her the old playfellow I had been longing to greet.

'How old we are growing!' said I, when she went in to dress for dinner. 'That child looks almost as old as her mother was when she was married.'

'Oh! don't talk of marrying!' exclaimed Anna. 'I can't bear to think of it.'

'Well, well! there is plenty of time yet', said I. 'She is hardly sixteen, I think,'

'Yet we have to be thinking about it whether we will or no,' said D——. 'We have had some little unpleasantness with two or three of our friends lately, because we cannot give her away in a hurry, and so early.'

'My little Minnie going to marry!' I exclaimed, in amusement and wonder.

'I fear it must be before long,' her mother said. 'But there is nothing in view at the moment. We have persuaded her to wait awhile, and we hope it may be some time before any youth appears who can at all correspond with her requirements: and she must have a perfect Bayard, with a good deal of the Appollo or Byron, and a likeness to the Admirable Crichton.'

'Yes. I hope she is safe, in that way,' observed D——. 'She is so romantic that the man does not exist.—'

'I am afraid that is false security,' said I. 'What delights romantic people is not what they find, but what they make; not what they actually see, but what they believe. Minnie will probably see a Bayard and all the rest in some neighboring youth, because the image occupies her eye.'

'That is my fear.' Anna replied. I wish I were sure of her till her twentieth birth-day. But the girls have such trains of suitors here.'

This I knew to be true, from the number of young men who leave the cities and come down from the North, to seek their fortunes on the virgin soil of the newer cotton states.

The governesses who are obtained from New England, and scattered among the planters' houses, are usually too old to marry in a region where marriage takes place much too early. Thus, while the maidens of New England are maintaining themselves in great numbers, and in various ways, the planters' daughters are married almost before they have ceased to be children. Each mother hopes and purposes to extend the period of youthful freedom and improvement in the case of her own girls; and every mother is disappointed when the time comes.

'And what of Madison?' I asked.—'What sort of a fellow shall I find him, I wonder.

Anna looked proud. D—— laughed.

'Madison will soon show you his quality,' said he.

'Yes!' said Anna, 'you will see at once the turn *he* takes.'

'So he is to be a character, is he?' I inquired.

'Why, yes,' replied D——. 'Our young men are ambitious, and almost every one has some particular notion of distinguishing himself. It may not be amiss. It may give them a purpose. It makes them show character early.'

'So much character! So much character!' exclaimed my sister complacently.

'Plenty of peculiarity,' I thought, when Madison came in to dinner, a solemn demeanor, and a condescending notice of me, his uncle. I soon gathered from his oracular words, that the boy had discovered the Perpetual Motion, and considered himself already separated from the common herd of mankind. He had traveled to the North—even to Harvard University—to communicate his discovery to the Professor of Natural Philosophy there; and he had returned, more than ever satisfied with his achievement. The Professor being ill, he had seen the Professor's lady. Sounding her about the probability of a hearing from the great man, he had obtained the reply, kind but jocose, that the Professor would no doubt be happy to attend to what he had to propose, on any subject, she might say, except, perhaps, Perpetual Motion, on which he had suffered so much waste of time.

Madison here rose, and made a flourishing bow, and turned homeward to provide for communicating his discovery to the world, without hindrance from old dons, ignorant, envious and obtrusive.

When we rose from the table, Madison kept his seat, preaching about perpetual motion. To my surprise, D——shut the door behind Anna and the children, and sat down again. When the lad had finished his lecture, he withdrew to his studies, and D——said to me:—

'What would you do with such a lad as that?'

'That depends on how much his notions are worth.'

'I don't put much confidence in them myself; but, if he really has a turn for study.——'

'Just so. Only let it *be* study. Don't keep him here, puffing himself up with the fancy of being a philosopher. Send him to Harvard, where he would be near us? He would find his level there, and discover that our Professors may possibly know more than he does.'

'Ah! that is exactly what can't be done,' replied D—— 'It is a disadvantage for life to a man here to have been to a northern college. He never gets over the suspicion of being tainted with bad opinions on the negro question.'

'Send him to a southern college, then. They do not stand so high as Harvard and New York; but probably they can teach Madison something.'

'No doubt; and it would be a great blessing, I'm sure, to us all. But the students of our southern colleges are apt to be so intemperate in politics that more and more parents are unwilling to send their sons there. A few weeks ago, these 'sons of the chivalry' learned that a sister of Mrs Beecher Stowe was staying in one of the professors' houses; and they serenaded her with marrow-bones and cleavers, and insulting songs.'

'Is it possible?'

'Yes; that is their notion of patriotism; and I should not exactly like Madison to take that turn, though I hope he will do his duty by his state the first time the North goes too far.'

The end of the matter was that no decision seemed feasable, and I saw plainly that Madison would go on with 'his studies,' as his mother said, but as I should have put it, with 'his dreams,' till some strong reality should bring out something more natural that was seen at present.—He must be a planter, D——said. His parents would not hear of the church for him. They owned that, while entirely convinced that slavery was a scriptural institution, they did not like to see clergymen turning slave owners, setting an overseer over the negroes, and themselves watching the overseer. It was better that their clergy should come from the North, fresh to the institution. They could be more free than a southern man to board out, or hire negroes for house service, as an alternative to having a plantation of their own. They usually feel into this last way of life by marriage or otherwise; but it did not quite suit D——'s notions of a clergyman's position. He could see no way for Madison but beginning life on cotton land in the usual way; and whatever fancies the lads might have while in their teens, they always did come round to this last, unless they early entered the army or navy.

It seemed to me that one part of education might have been better attended to, both in my niece's and nephews' case; that of assisting their parents in their everyday business, and preventing some of the discomforts which are always occurring where slaves are left to themselves for an hour. On the first morning for instance, we were all roused unconsciously early.—While dressing, I supposed my watch must have stopped for an hour and a half in the night; and when we met at the breakfast-table it appeared that others had supposed the same. It was then half-past six; but the hot waffles, buckwheat cakes, eggs and beefsteak, hominy and broiled ham, were on the table, as if it were the proper eight o'clock. The cook had been too lazy to ask the 'body servants' to inquire the time, and had served breakfast by guess. The family laughed; but it seemed to me that Minnie might undertake to announce the hour to the servants, if it was really impossible to trust them with the care of a kitchen clock. I found, however, that no confidence was felt in the watches; for I was appealed to, nearly every half hour in the day, within doors or in the field, by the negroes, to know what o'clock it was.

After breakfast, again, when I went with Anna on her round of morning duties, it seemed to me that there were various things that son and daughter might have seen to. In the negro quarter there was a sick man cowering over the fire, with nobody to attend to him. His wife was amusing herself in the sun, and had given him no breakfast. We had to stay till we saw him properly fed by his sulky wife. In another cabin there was a wretched baby, all skin and bone, moaning on a mat; and the mother was absent in that case, too. My sister observed that Diana would be the death of her baby by such neglect. There was no making her attend to her own child.

'Diana?' said I. 'Was not that the name of the woman who nursed you so admirably through your fever? But it is not the same woman, of course.'

'The same,' my sister replied. 'You will constantly find among these people that they nurse any white person with great ostentation while they will not trouble themselves to wait on husband or child. I don't mean that it is so with all. The number of runaways show that women will dare everything to meet a husband or free a child; but those that we call contented negroes behave like Diana, or like that exemplary wife that we stood over till she fed her husband.'

It struck me that here was something for Minnie to do; and so I thought when the old woman who collected and took care of the infants while the mothers were in the field had a score of complaints and petitions to make about all manner of unreasonable things; and when Flora and Bet, Juliet and Sal, waylaid us with handfuls of eggs, or a fowl which the mistress was expected to buy, I supposed she had supplied the cocks and hens and the food, and would hardly, therefore, pay for the eggs and the chickens; but she said it was expected. Her only doubt was as to whether these really came from the proper poultry yard. She was always afraid they might be stolen from a neighbor. Her husband did all he could to keep the people at home at night; but he was aware that they could and did get out and visit other plantations; and when there were any mean whites in the neighborhood there was seldom a night in which some robbery did not take place.

Just at the moment we met D—— coming from the stables. He never looked otherwise than good humored; but his wife divined that something was wrong.—As she looked in his face, he said aloud that he had found the ice-house door standing wideopen, and the ice melting as fast as it could this morning; and if Tippoo did not mind his duty better, it would be necessary to punish him. Still my sister led the way to a spot where we could speak in private; and there leaning over the fence, as if admiring the prospect, we heard what had happened. D——'s saddle and bridle had disappeared in the night—a handsome saddle; but that was not the worst of it. He was to be compelled to ride under difficulties, or not at all. Moreover, the best part of the blacksmith's tools were gone. For some weeks there has been petty thefts of eggs, vegetables, bacon, fodder and articles of dress; now a hat, now a pair of boots or a razor and strop. D—or Anna looked over the knives every night, and locked them up. I observed that both assumed that the white laborer I had seen, or some other neighbor of the same class, must be at the bottom of these thefts. The inconvenience was becoming so serious that something must be done. Anna asked her husband which of the people he would have flogged, to obtain a confession. D——replied that he wished he could get to the bottom of it in some other way, there was so little satisfaction in what was confessed by the people. Any one of them would say it was A who set him on to steal, or B, or C, or the mistress, or the devil, or the president, according to the supposed suspicion of the master. This was true, Anna said; but something must be done—some example must be made.—We must consult the overseer.

To the overseer's house we went, followed by many eyes. But it was natural that I should wish to see the place; and, besides, the man was not at home. The cottage was like what it used to be, but more bare, ugly and comfortless. A few fowls were strutting about within the zigzag pole fence; the piazza was dirty, and had two broken chairs in it. There was fishing tackle against the wall, and a worn out rifle over the mantle-pice. This was for show, the serviceable arms being out of sight. There was a shelf of books and a medicine chest, and a bare table, and that was all. We had hardly looked round us when the overseer came in from the field. He was as full of wrath against the theives as could be desired, I remember; but that is nearly all that I can recall, for his talk was full of oaths as Minnie's was of sighs and raptures, or Madison's of technical terms. I always thought that D——'s habit of swearing was something out of all ordinary measure; but it was moderate and gentlemanly in comparison with his overseer's. Of course I omit this characteristic in citing their conversation. The overseer's information amounted to little. He told of another theft or two, was certain that three or four of the negroes whom he mentioned had been on foot all night, by their laziness and their appearance this morning, and intended to flog them if they did not confess before the day was out.—Anna walked away out of earshot at this moment. She 'makes it a principle not to know what negroes are to be whipped, or when, or where. It could do no good; and if her feelings were excited, it might change her manner toward those particular negroes, or perhaps towards them all.'

We followed her when it was all said; and as we overtook her, the overseer was telling D—— that the driver of the nearest stage-coach had been 'hit' that morning; not very seriously, but a quarrel would come of it.'

'Shot,' my sister exclaimed, in answer to my look of inquiry.

'A man shot!' I exclaimed.

'You look as if you had never heard of such a thing before,' said D——. And the overseer eyed me with contempt.

'There never was anything like this country for quarrels,' exclaimed my sister, in a tone of annoyance. Nay, my dear,' said she to her husband, who would have checked her, 'you know we were looking back the other day through the nine years we have lived here, and we found—and here she turned to me—'that the attempts to kill somebody or other have been, on an average, four a week for the whole nine years.'

'Is it possible?' I exclaimed. 'And do the whites kill the most blacks, or the reverse?'

'Oh! it has nothing to do with the negroes at all,' Anna replied. 'That is, I mean that I am speaking of white gentlemen attacking one another.'

'Gentlemen!' I involuntary exclaimed.

'You should be aware, sir,' said the overseer, in a singularly disagreeable way, that we are all gentlemen here. We have no white laborers, except when you send us a scamp here and there from the North.'

As I took no notice, feeling no call to teach the overseer that brawling and manslaughter are not signs of good-breeding, Anna went on tell me that a neighboring clergyman had lately excited a strong sensation by preaching from the sixth commandment, and in the course of his sermon giving the statistics of manslaughter in Alabama for the last ten years in comparison with that of New and old England. The facts were so extraordinary that the preacher had been requested to publish his sermon; but when it was half through the press he had been so threatened that he was obliged to stop. The overseer growled out that this was all right; and even D——observed that it was injudicious to bring accusations against a state of society which the pastor did not, in fact, understand. Anna shook her head, and said no more.

The fields were worth visiting that fine spring day. The field hands were hideous, especially the women, with their scanty, dingy, coarse dresses, their floundering gait, and their vacant countenances streaming with perspiration. The ridges left by the plough were being converted into little mounds by hand, and the seed was already dropped into some of the holes.—Elsewhere there were young cotton plants to be kept clean from weeds; and we also saw some corn growing within another fence. D——differs from his neighbors in choosing to grow more food than they do, saying that he may make less money by that part of his land, but that he gains in security. Recent events have reminded me of this, and I am hoping that he may have food enough within his own boundrary to save him and his people from the famine in case of Mobile being blockaded. The young cotton plants, of the most vivid green, were flourishing when I last saw them—each one with a handful of cotton seed about its stem as manure.

The sun was getting high, and we turned homeward, while the overseer resumed his watch.

Minnie was absorbed in writing, though the younger children seemed to me to need some other supervison than that of their negro nurse. She roused herself when the cake and wine appeared, and was willing to take a drive in the afternoon—the drive promising charms both of nature, and friendship. In plain words, we were to go and see a pretty little prairie, five miles off, and to make two or three calls on our way home.

Two gentlemen dropped in, and stayed to dinner at two. I could have fancied this a continuation of my last visit, but for the growth of the young people.—There was the old story of indifferent soup, roast turkey (rather skinny,) and ham (excellent:) and of course a salad to be dressed with the gravy of the ham—a hit in the eating way, in my opinion.—There was a boiled fowl set down in one odd place, and a tongue in another; a lump of pork, stewed or somehow disguised; a vast variety of pickles, and the usual rice, hominy, high-spiced mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, radishes, and hot corn bread. Then pumpkin pies, and custard; a half a dozen West India preserves; almonds and raisins, nuts of various kinds, and vast blocks of ice cream, of two or three sorts. Wine, cider, and a bottle of ale, for my special indulgence, were provided; but the main consumption was of claret.

After dinner a retreat to the piazza was a matter of course; and there Minnie's admirers were wont to make the best of their time by drawing her apart, getting her to sing, or walking to and fro in the shade, whispering poetry of jokes. The lawyer was thus occupied this afternoon while we were enjoying our cigars, and Anna amusing the childen, when a messenger came on a heated and panting horse. The lawyer was wanted to take a deposition and make a will, Mr. Tr—— having been shot in the back as he was entering his own gate. Nobody was surprised.—This was one of the remote consequences of a duel fought in the preceding year, which was presided over by the governor of the state. When I expressed my surprise, I was told that there was scarcely